



To: House Health and Human Services Committee
From: Gary Brunk, Executive Director, Kansas Association of Community Action Programs, Inc.
Re: House Bill 2079

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee and to voice support for House Bill 2079. I'm Gary Brunk, and I'm the executive director of The Kansas Association of Community Action Programs. KACAP is the membership association for Community Action Agencies in Kansas that are working to create economic opportunity and end poverty in their communities.

In order to reduce poverty in its community, a Community Action Agency works to better focus available local, state, private and federal resources to assist low-income individuals and families to acquire useful skills and knowledge, gain access to new opportunities and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Access to health care is an issue that Community Action Agencies often encounter when working with low-income families. Thousands of people in Kansas can't get dental care when and where they need it. The fact is, finding a dentist is tough, especially for those who rely on public health insurance. There's a dental provider shortage in Kansas leaving 95 of our counties unable to keep up with the demand for oral health care. Instead of getting the treatment they need, people live in pain, miss school or work and develop life-threatening infections.

The good news is we already know how to dramatically improve access to dental care: allow mid-level dental providers—similar to physician assistants and nurse practitioners—to perform routine care. It's a safe, cost-effective and productive solution to the crisis.

Mid-level dental providers have been utilized by more than 50 countries for almost a century and are now practicing in Alaska, Minnesota and Maine. In all, more than 20 states are currently considering allowing these health professionals to provide routine and preventive care like cleanings, fillings and simple extractions.

While studies show conclusively that mid-level dental providers deliver safe, quality care, these workers also boost the economy. They allow dentists to grow their practices and increase revenues while treating more patients. The model creates new, good jobs that offer a career ladder for current dental employees. Finally, by improving the health care options available to employees and their families, implementing mid-level dental helps communities attract new businesses.

We respectfully ask for support of House Bill 2079.